

MATWATCH

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HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!! VOL. 2, NO. 22

SURVIVAL GAME: A TURNING POINT

When the final history book is written on the changing winds of pro wrestling in the 1980s, the date Nov. 26, 1987, should be remembered as significant as any.



Steve
Beverly

I'll long remember my startled reaction to what appeared to be a throwaway paragraph in BROADCASTING Magazine in August of that year. SURVIVOR SERIES? WWF pay-per-view on Thanksgiving night? Isn't that the night that's supposed to belong to belong to STARRCADE, which gave birth to the term "supercard" in the '80s, even if it was spelled with a double "R"?

Since most of you will not read this until after SURVIVOR SERIES '89 is history and since its outcomes basically just advance storylines, let's instead examine the impact of this event on wrestling history. First, go back to August 1987. Jim Crockett and Dusty Rhodes announced in New York a deal to offer four pay-per-view shows per year, beginning with STARRCADE '87: CHI-TOWN HEAT, followed by the BUNKHOUSE STAMPEDE, JIM CROCKETT SR. MEMORIAL CUP and THE GREAT AMERICAN BASH. I won't forget the news conference in which New York-based reporters quizzed Rhodes as to who he was. He responded: "Everybody who knows anything about rasslin' knows who I am. I'm better known than Elvis Presley."

Crockett had a commitment from a national pay distributor for his shows but what he didn't have was a lineup of cable systems to carry them. Plus, Rhodes arrogantly touted how the lineup would revolutionize the sport. In one sense, Rhodes may have been ahead of his time. Had the Crockett pay package been successful, Dusty envisioned reducing the numbers of annual house shows to around 100 and letting the pay revenue drive the company.

Sources say Crockett projected a \$10 million pay-TV revenue base; hence, the now infamous deals for expensive balloon payments to retain such talent as Lex Luger, the Road Warriors, Jim Cornette and others---calling for bonuses as high as \$200,000 at the end of their contract years. Balloon payments later settled at the rate of 40 cents on the dollar when Crockett ran out of money before selling majority interest in his company to Ted Turner.

What Crockett further lacked was the muscle of Turner's influence with the cable industry. In one sweeping move, Vince McMahon created a harmless ditty called SURVIVOR SERIES for Thanksgiving night with the express intent of destroying STARRCADE, still regarded as the mecca of wrestling supercards even after the McMahon record-breaking pay success with WRESTLEMANIA III. One of this country's top wrestling insiders told me at the time: "Vince doesn't care if this thing (SURVIVORS) loses money. He just wants to burn Crockett."

He did. From a business standpoint, McMahon used the momentum with WRESTLEMANIA to threaten cable operators carrying STARRCADE with a blackout of WM4, a prospect I can't believe Vince would have carried out because he needed the systems too badly. Second, he forced Crockett into moving STARRCADE to an afternoon start---putting the NWA into a defensive posture on a head-to-head basis for the first time. Third, from both a revenue and image standpoint, McMahon exposed Crockett's front office weakness in that he took a rookie concept and gained a bigger marketing blitz in two months than in the four years of history and tradition STARRCADE had produced.

As it was, SURVIVOR SERIES was available to seven million homes and STARRCADE to only 600,000, serving just six cable operators. SURVIVORS was a reasonably



good show, though its most significant memory for me was Bam Bam Bigelow outworking every WWF star in defeating all but Andre the Giant in a 3-on-1 deficit situation in the finale.

The genuine shocker was how STARRCADE was an exercise in NWA self-defeat, melting in a sea of egotistical booking.

Seeing Dusty defeat Luger for the U.S. belt was painful enough. A Ric Flair-Ronnie Garvin NWA title rematch had virtually no suspense. Add an obvious mission to kill the viability of the UWF Crockett had bought from Bill Watts, which left scars which still bleed today.

However, I remain convinced in addition to McMahon winning perhaps one of the most underrated business victories in SURVIVORS vs. STARRCADE, Rhodes expedited the deterioration of the NWA as a major mainstream force by refusing to put the Road Warriors over Tully Blanchard and Arn Anderson as world tag champions when the belts still had a glimmer of meaning.

It had all the trappings: a rabid Chicago Warriors' crowd, a 9-week TV buildup and the end of a ludicrous 2-year wait for the Roadies to be anointed as THE dominant team by title stature. Instead, Rhodes offered the most annoying of his "ref bump" finishes in denying the Warriors after it appeared they had won.

Shortly after the SURVIVORS-STARRCADE showdown, a trusted source told me: "Vince doesn't have to worry about Crockett because Jim has his own self-destruct button: Dusty Rhodes."

SURVIVORS was marginal, at best, in buy-rate (2.8% last year) but served its purpose. Only 20,000 homes saw STARRCADE and after the abominable BUNKHOUSE two months later, Crockett lost his pay contract and sought a financial suitor, who became Turner.

One wag suggested McMahon gave thanks while Crockett had the turkey. But without that Thanksgiving in '87, one wonders what might have been pro wrestling's future.

THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES**ARN STILL IN BUT TULLY MAY BE OUT OF NWA PLANS**

ATLANTA --- Tully Blanchard, reported for a month to be returning to the NWA, is said to be in jeopardy of not being hired by Turner Broadcasting System.

Blanchard, fired from Titan Sports before a SURVIVOR SERIES finale, is reportedly encountering negotiating difficulties for undisclosed reasons. His partner, Arn Anderson, is considered an NWA shoo-in, even though he will not sign a contract until after SURVIVORS.

MATWATCH has also learned from sources outside the NWA that Blanchard reportedly contacted WWF owner Vince McMahon about regaining his slot after learning he would likely not earn what he initially anticipated from TBS.

CLASH IX DRAWS THIRD HIGHEST RATINGS IN SERIES

TROY, N.Y. --- CLASH OF THE CHAMPIONS IX: NEW YORK KNOCKOUT, airing Nov. 15 on TBS, drew the third highest rating in the history of the CLASH series.

The 2 1/2 hour special scored a 4.9 rating and 7.8 share of audience, reaching 2.48 million homes. The rating finished only behind the first CLASH in 1988 (5.8) and FALL BRAWL '88 (5.4).

In homes delivery, CLASH IX was only topped by CLASH I in total audience. The Ric Flair-Terry Funk main event is expected to rival the Flair-Sting CLASH I topliner in viewership.

NWA RESTRUCTURES EVENT COORDINATORS; MURNICKS DROPPED

ATLANTA --- Four of the NWA's veteran event coordinators have been replaced, including long-time Jim Crockett promoters Carl and Elliott Murnick.

In what has been termed a "restructuring" of event promotion, the Murnicks---who handle Philadelphia and Virginia; and Ralph Freed, son-in-law of veteran promoter Fred Ward, who handled Georgia and Florida, are out.

WCW comptroller James (Chip) Burnham will take over NWA Southeast events and Gary Juster will assume the Murnick's Northeast territory.

In addition, former Crockett aide Sandy Scott is being switched from event coordination to supervising ring construction.

COMINGS & GOINGS

WHO WAS THAT GUY?: The 7-footer who appeared on the CLASH at the end of Steiners-Skyscrapers was NOT Jorge Gonzalez (El Gigante) but a guy Jody Hamilton found in Texas. He'll be called NITRON and is legit 7-1. To start with, he'll be Woman's bodyguard but do you sense an eventual squareoff with the 7-6 Gonzalez?

MORE NWA TALENT: It appears Tim Horner may be headed back to the NWA under a hood, perhaps as Captain USA or another kid-oriented character. And I'm told Leon White as Big Van Vader may indeed appear in February.

CENTER STAGE: At the Center Stage tapings, Ric Flair faced Muta on what I believe is the Thanksgiving weekend WCW. NWA is now taped on TBS through Dec. 2 and I'm told the next two weeks will be fine TV.

BOOKER HERE, BOOKER THERE: Late reports have Robert Fuller considering packing it in with CWF after December but stories CWF will shut down in '90 are probably exaggerated. Bill Dundee reportedly is about to take over booking for USWA. And Randy Rose and Billy Starr are now sharing creative chores for GEORGIA ALL-STAR.

ALL-STAR BURNOUT: Jimmy Powell apparently agreed to give up the GAS booker slot after burning out from working in Georgia and for Buck Robley's mid-South promotion.

WHERE'S PAUL E.?: Booking for ICW is where. Well, he handled one TV taping. Well, a fourth of one. The story we're told is Dangerously had four hours of TV laid out for the Savoldis in Newark, which included a hot angle involving Bob Orton vs. Tom Prichard. But sources tell us Paul became so disenchanted with the inexperienced director that he shut down production early into the second hour.

WHAT ABOUT TITAN?: We're also told from reliable sources that Paul has been given a tentative February starting date with Titan but still no word on what his role would be. A proposal to bring Dangerously back as co-host of WCW was rejected by management.

JAPAN BOUND: Flair will face Muta on the New Japan Tokyó Egg Dome show. Larry Zbyszko will appear as AWA champ on the Feb. 10 show. Seiji Sakaguchi also wanted to sign Hulk Hogan for the show and was willing to offer \$200,000 to Hogan and Titan but McMahon refused. Van Vader will also defend one of his world titles.

PETRIK GOES, TOO: TBS executive and WCW president Jack Petrik will accompany Flair and Muta on the Japan trip and apparently, efforts will be made to strike a trade arrangement with New Japan, which is something many American fans have suggested for months.

VADER IN MEXICO: Vader captured the Mexican (UWA) version of the world heavyweight title Nov. 12 in Mexico City. He's expected to return on a monthly basis to defend the belt.

MORE LOGIC: Explain this one: Mark Starr & Lou Perez won the PWF Florida tag titles last week. Then, it's plugged that Starr & Brickhouse Brown will defend the belts in Orlando Nov. 19 vs. the Bounty Hunters. These titles shift holders with apparent ease there. Also on the card: Kendall Windham & Ron Slinker vs. Mike Graham & Billy Jack Haynes.

ON COLOR: Kevin Sullivan will be at the color mike with Jim Ross on WCW the next two weekends. Backstage talk at the CLASH had Road Warrior Animal talking of how he and Hawk had offered to orient their characters more toward children but no real response from the company.

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SCALE: PINFALL! - Must See. PILEDRIVER - Excellent.
POWERSLAM - Good. DRAW - Average. RESTHOLD - Fair.
BOMB - Poor. PLUS - Midscale rating.

(NWA/CLASH IX/TBS) - Freebirds d. Road Warriors by DQ when Hawk tosses ref aside; ANGLE: Ric Flair named NWA Wrestler of Decade and Sting NWA Most Popular; Doom d. Eddie Gilbert & Tommy Rich; Midnight Express d. Dynamic Dudes when Jim Cornette bashes Shane Douglas with tennis racket; Steve Williams d. Super Destroyer (Jack Victory) & Norman joins Doc in celebration; Steiners d. Skyscrapers by DQ when Doom & Nitron run in but Warriors save to start 4-team brawl; U.S. TITLE: Lex Luger d. Brian Pillman by using chair when Nick Patrick down; I QUIT MATCH: Ric Flair d. Terry Funk but Gary Hart decks Funk before Muta & Dragon Master attack Flair. Sting saves but Luger runs in & he & Muta bash both Flair & Sting w. chairs, then Lex destroys their two trophies. PILEDRIVER.

(NWA/TBS) - [POWER HOUR]: U.S. TITLE: Luger d. Dick Murdoch; Buzz Sawyer (debut) d. Luis Estilla; Tom Zenk/Pillman d. Freebirds by DQ. WNW: Gordon Solie reviews CLASH. FUNK'S GRILL: Jim Cornette & Midnights tell why they turned on Dudes. DRAW.

[WCW]: NWA WORLD TAG TITLE/Steiners d. Freebirds for belts when Jimmy Garvin catches Michael Hayes from top rope as Rick rolls away; Samoan 3 d. Mike Justice/Lee Scott/Bob Emery; Pillman d. Lou Tallifoni; Sawyer d. Trent Knight; Doom Simmons d. Jerry Price; Kevin Sullivan d. Tommy Angel; Skyscrapers d. Pat Rose/Cuban Assassin; REPLAYS: (From CLASH) Midnights-Dudes, Post-match of Flair-Funk; Steiners-Scrapers; (From WCW) Williams-Sid Vicious. DRAW. [MAIN EVENT]: (Key match) Sting/Pillman d. New Zealand Militia and Lord Littlebrook arrives and beats the tar out of Militia for losing (he'll manage them). DRAW.

(NWA/SYND.) - [NWA PRO]: Sid Vicious d. Tim Hughes; Sawyer d. Rock Hard Rick; Steiners d. The Pro/Bob Cook; Kevin Sullivan d. Ric Ryder; Muta d. Ranger Ross; Pillman d. Italian Stallion; PEDICINO'S NOSE: STARRCADE preview. RESTHOLD. [WORLD WIDE]: Road Warriors d. Glenn Morgan/Ralph Hodges; Doom d. Mike Thor/Rock Hard; Sawyer d. Lee Scott; From WCW: Williams-Vicious; Sting d. Al Novarro; Zenk/Pillman d. Freebirds by DQ; SST d. Ryder/Stallion; SEGMENT: Cornette reviews turning on Dudes. RESTHOLD.

(USWA) - J.J. Funk d. Taurus Bulba; Punisher d. Steve Williams (not Doc); Chris Adams d. Billy Travis but is handcuffed and Toni Adams beaten by Devastation in tasteless angle; REPLAY: Percy Pringle bashed w. guitar. USWA TITLE: Jerry Lawler double countout vs. Terry Gordy. DRAW-PLUS.

(GA. ALL-STAR) - Kareem Muhammad Candy d. Troy Aldridge; Joey Maggs d. Invader; Billy Starr d. Wild Bill Smith; Randy Rose/Joel Deaton d. Pablo Crenshaw/Ray Bailey; Chic Donovan & Big Red d. Dino Minelli/War Daddy; Mr. Atlanta/Mike Golden vs. Jim Powell/Burgerman ends in progress. BOMB.

(CWA) - Dutch Mantel d. Keith Eric; Tony Anthony d. T.D. Steel; ARENA: Anthony-Mantel, Lawler-Soultaker; Soultaker d. Kelly Ross; Frankie Lancaster/Axel Riggins d. Rooster

TV TEMPO

Week of Nov. 13-19

Cogburn/K. Dillinger; Todd Champion d. Mike Davis. RESTHOLD.

(WWF/USA) - [COUNTDOWN TO SURVIVOR SERIES]: Tito Santana d. Bubba Bossman; Curt Hennig d. Butch Miller but Bushwackers doubleclothesline Hennig after; Randy Savage d. Hercules by smacking him with Sherri's purse; Ultimate Warrior wins DQ over Tully Blanchard when Arn Anderson runs in; Ted DiBiase d. Demolition Smash. POWERSLAM.

(WWF/SYND.) - [CHALLENGE]: Demolition d. Conquistador I & Gene Ligon; Andre the Giant/Haku win squash; Dusty Rhodes d. Akeem; Jim Duggan d. Rusty Riddle; From SUPERSTARS: John Tenta, Dino Bravo attack Ultimate in STRENGTH SHOWDOWN; SEGMENT: SURVIVORS update. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

[SUPERSTARS]: Brutus Beefcake d. Scott Colton; Rick Rude d. unnamed opponent; SEGMENT: Rick Martel models winter fashions; Jim Neidhart d. Bobby Jagger; Bolsheviks d. Red Tyler/unknown jobber; BRO. LUV w. Hulkamaniacs; Hennig d. Santana. BOMB-PLUS.

(CWF) - Cactus Jack Manson d. Johnny Gilbert; Brickhouse Brown d. John Dalton; Adrian Street d. Eliminator; Dennis Condrey d. Chief Little Lyn; Southern Boys d. Gladiator & Hurricane Bronson. BOMB.

(LUCHA LIBRE) - Mr. Pepto/Superboy d. Torbellino Blanco & Carlos Vega; 6-MAN: Relampago/Beethoven/Tim Talltree d. Alex Knight/Krusher Krugeroff/Riki Ataki; Mercurio/Piloto Suicida d. Nino Asenino/Chacal Rivera; Bobby Bradley & Ultraman II d. El Salvaje/El Chicano; Mando Guerrero d. Ari Romero by DQ; Eddy Guerrero vs. Craizy #33 double DQ when Mando & Romero run in. DRAW-PLUS.

(PORTLAND) - PACIFIC NW TITLE: Scotty the Body d. C.W. Bergstrom but Steve Doll runs in & challenges for title; Carl Stiles d. Jonathan Boyd; PACIFIC NW TAG TITLE: Doll & Rex King d. Brian Adams/Jeff Warner when Warner fouls up & hits Adams. Adams & Warner brawl & Rockers help Warner; Bill Francis d. Al Madril by DQ; Jonathan Holliday d. Beetlejuice using trunks. ANGLES: 1) Scotty attacks Doll, steals his \$500 and won't give Doll title match; 2) Grappler puts up bounty on Rip Oliver & Adams clobbers Oliver w. kendo stick. Oliver rallies before pullapart. POWERSLAM.

(AWA) - Russian Brute d. Jimmy Magnum; Trooper d. Nacho Bererra; PRESS CONF.: Bill Apter w. Nick Bockwinkel; AWA TAG TITLE: Destruction Crew d. Greg Gagne/Paul Diamond when Kokina & Adnan al-Kaissie attack Gagne & Wayne Bloom decks Diamond w. knucks for pin; AWA TITLE: Larry Zbysko d. Derrick Dukes (who no-shows) by forfeit. RESTHOLD.

(PWF) - Billy Jack Haynes d. Mike Awesome; Terminator d. El Cid; Ron Slinker d. Rock Hard Rick; Gator Keirn d. Dennis Knight; Tommy Rogers d. Powerhouse Parker; FLA. TAG TITLES: Bounty Hunters d. Lou Perez when Mark Starr abandons Perez. Haynes offers to team w. Perez but Wayne Coulter says no. REPLAY: Kendall Windham-Mike Graham angle. LADIES PT. OF VIEW: Diane Hamilton w. Rogers. FACEOFF: Kendall refuses to wrestle Keirn but Graham runs in from back & the 2 brawl. CLIPS: Bugsy McGraw, Nikita Koloff. RESTHOLD.

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LINES OF THE WEEK

1. Gordon Solie, CLASH IX: "Five letters, two words: I QUIT!" 2. Solie, CLASH, on wrestlers rolling out of ring: "I don't mind having a Coors Light with them but I sure don't want 'em around here by the desk." 3. Jim Ross, CLASH, on Steiners-Skyscrapers: "It looks like a wreck on an interstate here in Troy, N.Y." 4. Jesse Ventura, COUNTDOWN: "I've figured out why they (Bushwackers) walk that way. They use alcohol for deodorant." 5. Jesse, COUNTDOWN, on 'Wackers: "I've figured out why they bite their opponents. They're afraid to bite back." 6. Solie, CLASH, on Lex Luger: "There's the sign of his courage: a blue steel folding chair." 7. WOMAN, CLASH: "Men, look at it. Wish you had it and eat your heart out." 8. Rick Steiner, CLASH: "I had it and I don't want it." 9. Scott Steiner, CLASH, on WOMAN: "My mom said, 'Never hit a lady.' You ain't no lady." 10. Piper, COUNTDOWN: "I know you & Rude's Brood, Boobsie. 3:00 in the morning: 'Hello, this is Bobby.'"

11. Vince McMahon & Ventura, COUNTDOWN: (VMc) "Bossman sure sweats a lot." (JV) "I'm sure you sweat in croquet if the sun's not right, McMahon." 12. Ross, CLASH, on Rick Steiner: "He's a couple of sandwiches short of a picnic." 13. Randy Rose, GAS, to Boni Blackstone: "You'd look good in a potato sack." 14. Rose, GAS: "Bullet, whatever he wants to be called. I call him old." 15. Ronald P. Gossett IV, CWA: "That woman in the front row must be the twin sister of Quasimoto." 16. Ross, CLASH: "Troy is known as the place where Mike Tyson got his last two parking tickets." 17. Ventura, WWF, on fans: "You can tell they flunked a few grades." 18. Don Coss, PORTLAND, on Scotty boozing Rockers: "Scotty's full of booze." 19. Coss & Scotty, PORTLAND: (DC) "The belts were held up last week." (STB) "I hear you were held up at a 7-Eleven." 20. Scotty, PORTLAND: "Rip Oliver won't be pushing logs any more, he'll be pushing up daisies." 21. Coss, PORTLAND: "Scotty, you're mouth's going at 78 while your mind's going at 33 1/3." 22. Scotty & Coss, PORTLAND: (STB) "I saw Beetlejuice pushing a shopping cart on the poor side of town, looking for scraps of clothing." (DC) "Did you enjoy the ride?"

STRONGEST COMMENTS - 1. Jim Cornette, PH: "If we'd had to sign one more autograph for those genetic defects who call themselves fans, I'd have thrown up." 2. Solie, CLASH, on Funk-Flair: "This far transcends anything I've ever seen in the sport." 3. Ventura, COUNTDOWN, on Sherri Martel & McMahon: "She'd whip your butt!"

NICKNAMES OF THE WEEK - 1. THE JAY LENO OF PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING (Cornette on himself). 2. BIG LOSTMAN (Piper on Bossman). 3. THE TRUMAN CAPOTE OF THE WWF (Piper on Jesse). 4. KANSAS CORNFED COWS (Rude on Kansas fans).

QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK - 1. Piper, COUNTDOWN: "Did we lose our motivational tapes, Boobsie?" 2. McMahon, COUNTDOWN, on Savage-Sherri: "Do they have a personal relationship as well as a professional one?" 3. Piper, COUNTDOWN: "Are you a bit irregular, Boobs?"

BEST PICTURES - 1. TBS, for complete Funk-Flair I QUIT match. 2. USA, Tully Blanchard's over-top bump vs. Warrior.

3. TBS, Rick Steiner throwing popcorn to crowd. 4. TBS, Cornette bashing Douglas. 5. USA, Savage smashing Herc with purse. 6. TBS, Norman in Santa hat.

BEST AUDIO - TBS, audio work during I QUIT match.

BLOOPER AWARD - 1. Ross, PH/WCW, for saying Steiners first brothers since Andersons to win NWA tag title. The Briscos won it after Ole & Gene's final reign. 2. Don Owen, PORTLAND, for introing Brian Adams as BIG CHRIS ADAMS.

DREADED GLITCH AWARD - TBS, for losing satellite feed for 3 minutes during CLASH.

BOO AWARDS - 1. TBS, for no Cornette TV interview at CLASH after bashing Dudes. 2. WWF, McMahon & Ventura, for not identifying jobbers in 2 matches, particularly one as well known as Bobby Jaggers.

TUBE TALK

Funk vs. Flair scored a 6.3 rating/10 share in 3.34 million homes, making it the second most watched match in cable TV history....Cornette did a terrific interview on POWER HOUR but I still think fans won't boo him....Wasn't it interesting how Heenan nudged closer to "firing" Tully Blanchard on COUNTDOWN?....Tully definitely will not come to the NWA now. He reportedly has medical problems and until solved, Ole Anderson will be elevated into 6-man tags with Flair & Arn....Speaking of Arn, if his deal is finalized, he'll premiere on TBS Dec. 9....Midnights vs. Dudes headlines the Dec. 2 WCW....REMEMBER: 1989 MATWATCH ANNUAL is \$10. ORDER NOW at MATWATCH address. Gift annuals earn you 3 bonus issues of MATWATCH...Hope your Thanksgiving's great!

RATINGS RAP

SYNDICATION

Week Ending Nov. 5	Rating	Stations	Pct. U.S.
WWF	8.6	250	97%
NWA	6.3	165	92%

CABLE

Week Ending Nov. 15	Rating	Share	Total Homes
CLASH IX (TBS 11/15)	4.9	7.8	2.51 million
COUNTDOWN/SURVIVORS (USA 11/12)	3.9	5.6	1.89 million
NWA POWER HOUR (TBS 11/10)	2.9	5.3	1.47 million
NWA W. CHAMPIONSHIP (TBS 11/11)	2.9	5.8	1.46 million
COUNTDOWN (Repeat) (USA 11/13)	2.9	4.2	1.41 million
NWA MAIN EVENT (TBS 11/12)	2.4	4.3	1.21 million
WWF ALL-AMERICAN (USA 11/12)	2.4	6.2	1.16 million
NWA POWER (Replay) (TBS 11/11)	1.0	7.4	507,000

(ANALYSIS: This was the highest-rated week for TV wrestling in more than a year and NWA POWER HOUR achieved its all-time high with the 2.9, buoyed by a 3.8 rating lead-in from the TBS movie "The Horse Soldiers." WCW scored its second straight 2.9 and the big 6.8 combo for the Sunday and Monday WCW COUNTDOWN telecasts give SURVIVORS a big boost.)

I read with great interest your recent suggestions to help out the NWA and while many were excellent, I must take exception to your idea of abolishing the NWA monicker. While you may be correct in your assertion that only a small core of the NWA's following cares about the significance of the NWA name, it is that very same core audience the NWA must build upon....merely changing a name will solve nothing (witness World Class/USWA). Further, such a decision would have to be considered foolhardy. I am not alone when I say that I enjoy Jim Ross or Gordon Solie (it was great to hear him on WCW) go off on tangents about the NWA and its history. Changing the name would be playing Vince and, for all his virtues, we don't need another Vince.

PAUL J. MacARTHUR
CAMILLUS NY

You were on target with many of your "save the NWA" suggestions, save one: "bring an end to the NWA." I can't believe you, a devotee of wrestling history, could even consider such an abhorrent act.

RICHARD FELKER
TAMPA FL

Just for argument's sake, let's suppose that BOTH Funk and Muta had been successful at scaling the Thunderdome cage and escaping. Where would that have left Flair and Sting? Completely confused, perhaps? Unsure as to what to do next, maybe? Or just plain perplexed by an utterly ridiculous turn of events that made absolutely no sense. Funny---it all sounds like the NWA as a whole.

JEFF SIEGEL
EVANSTON IL

You'd really eliminate the NWA name? I think you've been hit by one too many piledrivers.

ARLENE CARTER
GREENVILLE SC

I really liked the I REMEMBER column on El Gran Lothario. I remember Lothario's days here in Florida and if I'm not mistaken, he departed shortly after the Outlaws (Dusty Rhodes & Dick Murdoch) defeated Argentina Apollo and himself for the Fla. tag titles. Of course, that was when a new era, I felt, started when Rhodes hit the scene.

GREG GOODE
FT. LAUDERDALE FL

HALLOWEEN HAVOC '89 was probably the weakest PPV the NWA and Turner have done this year. Of course, we knew that Chicago, Nashville and Baltimore were going to be tremen-

YOU SAID IT!!!

dously hard to top. But something has to happen on TV with WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING to interest people in watching the TV product and going to the house shows. I've heard the excuses that "well we don't want to give away too much on TV or "if we give it to 'em on TV, they won't come to the house shows." Well, what difference does it make if no one is coming to the house shows?

TONY RICHARDS
PADUCAH KY

(FSB: I agreed up until the last couple of weeks and with the Nov. 15 CLASH. The November sweeps NWA TV are showing signs of perking up and should into December.)

THUNDERDOME would have been a lot better without the stupid electricity gimmick. Why they pushed that it would have a roof when it didn't is beyond me--but then again, what would be the purpose of climbing up the cage if there was no chance getting out? Bruno should have reffed the Roadies-Skyscrapers instead. There was no purpose for him in the THUNDERDOME, other than to declare the winner.

JEFF ZINGER
WOODSTOCK ONT

Hasn't the WWF been awful lately? Is Vince choking, or what? I know Hogan-Lanny Poffo is to set up Hogan-Perfect but putting it on SNWEE???

PHIL GALLOWAY
SAN DIEGO CA

Why won't the promotions release TV tapes from the 1960s-70s? VCRs weren't around in those days and I became a fan in grade school and would love to see some TV matches I remember growing up. Your column on the back pages about TV matches in the 1960s from Florida is great. I've been a fan about 20 years and I remember staying up Saturday night to watch a wrestling show after Roller Derby on a UHF channel.

ANTHONY PARILLO
PROVIDENCE RI

(FSB: I agree, Anthony, I'd love to see it but I am told the promotions don't feel there's enough of a market for old tapes. I strongly disagree and wish someone would try.)

I have followed pro wrestling ever since I was in grade school in Rochester, N.Y., then in Minneapolis when I was in college (Mad Dog Vachon and a 22-year-old Harley Race), then in Philadelphia, more or less, ever since I started teaching at the University of Delaware. My colleagues and students razz me about my interest but professoring is tedious. There is nothing like a piledriver to liven up the day.

DOUGLAS STALKER
NEWARK DE

INSTANT REVIEWS

CLASH: A CLASSIC FINALE

Yes, I was just like you: I thought after the first 30 minutes this was a Northeast crowd unfamiliar with the NWA and this is going to have as much zip as WRESTLEMANIA.

The Road Warriors-Freebirds match was as bad as I've ever seen those two have with no crowd enthusiasm. Bruce Snyder of Columbus, Ga., said: "Any colder and it would have been sub-arctic."

But this was a show which began to rise like mercury in a thermometer in intensity in special moments: Eddie Gilbert working his can off trying to rev the crowd, the turning point of Jim Cornette smacking Shane Douglas in a brilliant sucker job (they still won't boo Corny), the short and sweet Steve Williams win finalizing the turn of Norman, a well-booked Luger-Pillman encore (though I hope Lex doesn't become saddled as a chair-basher--he should just win) and theowd explosion during Steiners-Skyscrapers, which proved to be a stronger matchup than Warriors-Scrapers.

And then the classic: the innovative use of the mike gave me the feeling of actually being in the ring during Flair-Funk like I never recall. The match was as brutal as I've ever watched, and deserves to be in the BROADCAST/CABLE MATCH OF THE YEAR nominees. If this was indeed Funk's finale, he was magnificent and the work of Jim Ross and Gordon Solie kept Terry from being shamed with the I QUIT finish. Funk has been the greatest example of a performer during 1989 and I cannot tell how I admire the efforts of this 45-year-old.

Keith Mitchell's lighting was perhaps the best ever on a CLASH and despite a brief loss of satellite feed and maybe three scattered missed shots, production quality was impeccable and the ring entrances were spectacular.

Only Ross' call on Flair-Steamboat I was better than his work during Funk-Flair in building the drama. While some callers believe Solie lacked his old intensity, I felt he offered an air of credibility these shows often lack. It was as if Rod Serling had control of the first half-hour.

MATWATCH 25 SCALE: Announcing, 4.0; Quality of Matches, 3.2; Crowd Enthusiasm, 3.5; Overall Production, 4.2; Overall Excellence of Show, 4.0. TOTAL RATING: 18.9.

Clash & Countdown

HEENAN, PIPER DO IT AGAIN

I'm sure it's not the intent of the WWF but one could almost feel sorry for Bobby Heenan as badly as he takes a battering from Roddy Piper and Gorilla Monsoon every Monday. But that's what lifts this show above the norm from it's usual lackluster matchups.

COUNTDOWN TO SURVIVORS was a well-edited and nicely-conceived preview to sell tickets for SURVIVOR SERIES III with the innovation of opposing members of SURVIVORS teams in singles affairs which lead to buildup angles.

Other than Tito Santana's upset over Big Bossman (aided in typical Dusty Rhodes fashion), none of the matches brought any genuine surprises. What made this show click was the byplay between Heenan, Piper and Monsoon---the best alternative to Monday Night Football since ALL IN THE FAMILY left Mondays on CBS.

The show was nothing more than a souped-up version of PRIME TIME WRESTLING, though the A-team of Vince McMahon and Jesse Ventura were brought in to call the action. McMahon restrained his penchant for excessive hoarse carnival barking in this one and Ventura was at his comical best during the Butch Miller-Curt Hennig match, particularly when he said the Bushwackers "walk the way they do because they use alcohol for deodorant."

Piper has made a remarkable impact in resurging what had been a lifeless spring and summer for PTW and he's at his best with lines like, "I know you and Rude's Brood. Three o'clock in the morning... 'Hello, this is Bobby.'" And Heenan follows with that slow burn.

I don't offer the same 25 SCALE on pre-taped and edited shows but give this one a POWERSLAM, particularly for its entertainment values, for which this promotion excels.

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